

## **25,000 Chickens Culled on Bird Flu Farm**

UPDATE 2 August 2006

AMSTERDAM — Ministry of Agriculture officials began culling 25,000 chickens at a farm in the province of Gelderland at 2.30am on Wednesday morning. A mild form of bird flu was detected there.

The culling team followed advice from the Animal Protection Society (Dierenbescherming) on how best to gas the poultry. "A gas pipe will be positioned in the centre of the barn and branches will run from there to other parts of the building. This spreads the gas evenly," a Ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday evening.

The farm will be fully disinfected after the culling and removal of the poultry.

The culling operation was originally scheduled for Tuesday afternoon but was postponed when Dierenbescherming called for it to be done in a more humane way.

"In the last outbreak in 2003 they sealed off the sheds and blew in the gas from one side. Afterwards, all the chickens lay piled up in one corner. They had climbed on top of each other to escape and suffered cruel death by suffocation," a Dierenbescherming official said.

The poultry farm near Voorthuizen in Gelderland was sealed off on Tuesday after traces of bird flu were detected there.

Virologist Ab Osterhaus stressed the traces were of a mild form of the avian flu. This variant is far less virulent than the one that led to the culling of millions of chickens and other poultry in the region in 2003.

Sometimes chickens don't even become ill from this mild strain. It is also far removed from the H5N1 strain that can be deadly for humans.

Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture imposed a ban on the transportation of live or dead poultry, eggs or feed within a three-kilometre zone around the factory. Shipments of pigs and cows are also prohibited if the destination is a firm within the zone.

Other poultry farms in the region have been ordered to take measures to ensure visitors do not come into contact with poultry.

Henk van den Brink, who runs a poultry firm five kilometres west of Voorthuizen, said he was not overly concerned. He suggested the matter "would fizzle out".

His birds were culled in 2003 as a preventative measure and he said he hoped this was something he would "never have to experience again".